

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE  
WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION  
March 15 & 16, 2005**

The regular meeting of the Washington State Transportation Commission was called to order at 1 P.M., on March 15, 2005 in Room 1D2 of the Transportation Building in Olympia, Washington.

Commissioners present at the meeting were: Chair Stedman, Ed Barnes, Bob Distler, Dick Ford, Elmira Forner, A. Michèle Maher and Dan O'Neal.

**STATE AND FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE UPDATE**

Larry Ehl, Federal Legislative Liaison, WSDOT, provided an update regarding 2006 federal transportation funding and reauthorizing of the federal transportation law (TEA-21). He noted that the Senate and House are expected to pass the transportation reauthorization bill in March or April.

Chair Stedman introduced Louise Bray, Transportation Executive Policy Advisor for Governor Gregoire.

Bill Ford, Chief Budget Services, provided an update to the Commission regarding the status of the Governor's 2005 Transportation Budget. He reported that there have been no formal sessions in the House. The Department has given presentations in work sessions or responded to questions from members in both houses. At this time there has been no action on the supplemental budget. He noted that the week of March 21<sup>st</sup> should be the pivotal point. He provided a brief summary of SB 6083, noting that the bill would increase the gas tax one cent per year for twenty years, establish a new account. It also requires that the Commission assess the efficiency of how fuel tax dollars are being spent on transportation projects and make recommendation to the Legislature for renewal every five years. These changes are significant. The Department has technical issues with the wording in the bill.

Don Griffith, Legislative Liaison, provided highlights of session legislation. He distributed the half-time report that provides a summary of transportation related legislation being considered this session.

**SECRETARY'S REPORT**

Secretary MacDonald welcomed Bob Distler to the Commission.

Steve McKerney, Director, Internal Audit, briefed the Commission regarding the state auditor's March 7, 2005 accountability report. The state auditor's Department related findings reflect the Department's improved controls to enhance accountability in the area of WSF travel payments to employees in excess of written contract amounts and recommends that WSF pursue a modification to the written union contract to reflect actual travel payment practices. The Department responded that it would consider the recommendation and take appropriate action. The auditor also finds that WSF controls over revenue collections at the ferry terminals did not provide reasonable assurance that public funds are appropriately safeguarded. The auditor recommends that WSF develop and follow internal controls adequate to provide reasonable assurance that public funds are adequately safeguarded. The Department responded that it is in the process of replacing the current point-of-sale system with an electronic fare system. Secretary MacDonald shared that he attended an AASHTO conference in Washington D.C.

John Conrad, Assistant Secretary, Engineering and Regional Operations, provided an update regarding the Port Angeles graving dock site. He noted that the expert review panel recommends that the Department pick a new site while continuing to work with the existing contractor. The

Department has identified three sites that are the most feasible for building the pontoons for the bridge. The Department's engineering staff is currently studying these facilities. Construction of the anchors in Port Angeles is still under consideration with the original 2008 targeted completion date of the Hood Canal Bridge extended to 2009.

Secretary MacDonald briefly commented that there is ongoing interest in investigating what happened at the graving dock site, and an investigation will likely occur. A draft report is being prepared by the Department and will be presented to the Commission for review. Other topics of discussion were future development of the graving dock site and where we go from here.

Secretary MacDonald shared that Mike Anderson has been appointed as Director of WSF. He moved on to summarize information that has been presented to the Legislature. Commissioners and the Secretary held conversation regarding state operated versus privately operated passenger only service. Other discussion was new vessel construction, tariff policy and budgetary issues.

***It was moved by Commissioner Forner, and seconded by Commissioner Maher to appoint Commissioner Distler to the Tariff Policy Committee. The motion passed unanimously.***

Secretary MacDonald commented briefly regarding ferry security and food service.

Secretary MacDonald provided a brief overview of his and Commission Distler's meeting with Senator Haugen regarding ferry tariff proposals. Commissioner Distler noted that the meeting was held to provide Senator Haugen an overview of the tariff structure, the overall financial situation, possible alternatives as well as potential outcomes that the Tariff Policy Committee will be considering before making recommendation.

## **WASHINGTON TRANSPORTATION PLAN WORKSHOP**

Paula Hammond, Chief of Staff, provided a brief overview of WTP materials that have been presented to the Commission at previous meetings. She noted that today's presentation is a continuation of safety primarily focusing on areas where there may be gaps in policy or strategy development.

Elizabeth Robbins, Manager, Policy Development and Regional Coordination, shared that today's presentation will be the continuation of phase two WTP- Safety part 2 and Transportation Access. In phase two the Commission will consider base or existing investment areas and proposed areas of targeted investment. Following the presentation the Commission would be asked to concur on the existing set of guiding principles and make note of those areas where there are identified gaps in Commission policy or strategy to implement policy.

John Shambaugh, Aviation Planner, WSDOT Aviation, provided an overview of safety issues and aviation accidents. He noted that Washington state ranks number six in the United States for the number of accidents. This is primarily due to the number of pilots registered, terrain issues and climatic conditions. Two major safety issues are weather and obstructions. The Department proposes the implementation of the All Weather Access Program, which initiates real-time weather, navigation, communication systems and approach procedures across the state.

The Obstruction Program currently works with the FAA, local jurisdictions and airports to purchase land at the end of the runways and the removal of obstructions.

Bill Legg, ITS Operations Engineer, briefed the Commission regarding highway security. A phase one vulnerability assessment has been completed on the state highway network. This analysis indicated that there must be counter measures taken on eighteen structures. These counter measures include access control and surveillance. In addition, structures would be enhanced in order to resist

damage. WSDOT is an active partner in security measures.

Commissioners shared their concerns and ideas regarding the safety plan.

Judy Giniger, Director, Public Transportation and Rail Division, introduced Robin Phillips, Administrator, Agency Council on Coordinated Transportation (ACCT). The Department is identifying key issues for people without access to an automobile or the ability to drive. The Department seeks policy guidance in order to determine how to provide services to communities. Comprehensive strategies are needed to address the transportation issues of the growing elderly population and increasing rural isolation. The long-range plan is based on data analysis focusing on ten key issues that will shape future transportation budget proposals.

Marilyn Mason Plunkett, President, Community Transportation Association of the Northwest, and CEO of People for People – non-profit providers. She explained that community transportation fills a unique niche in providing transportation services across the state that is a safety net for many people. She provided a brief overview of service gaps in rural communities, and the competitive grant process and funding.

### **PALOUSE SCENIC BYWAY ROUTE EXTENSION**

Paula Connelley, State Scenic Byways Coordinator, presented Resolution 670 requesting the Commission to extend the Palouse Scenic Byway from Old SR 195 from SR 195 passing through Rosalia to the Whitman County Line; Hume Road between SR 27 and SR 195 leading to Steptoe Butte State Park; Scott Road, the southwest entrance road to LaCrosse; and Scharpenberg Road, the east entry to LaCrosse. Ms. Connelley noted that if these routes are designated as part of the scenic byway then they are eligible for funding from the National Scenic Byway Program.

Tim Meyer, Whitman County Director of Parks, Fair and Facilities Management, shared his support in adding the above roads to the Palouse Scenic Byway.

***It was moved by Commissioner Maher and seconded by Commissioner Ford to approve Resolution 670 designating the above mentioned roads as part of the Palouse Scenic Byway. The motion passed unanimously.***

Chair Stedman distributed a letter from Rob Johnson, Policy Director, Transportation Choices Coalition Working Group. Commissioners briefly discussed the letter and its intent. Commissioner Ford noted that he would like specifics regarding funding requests for pedestrian/bicycle routes that would potentially be included in the WTP.

***It was moved by Commissioner Ford and seconded by Commissioner Maher to request specific project information from the transportation working group. The motion passed unanimously.***

### **AMTRAK FUNDING UPDATE**

Judy Giniger, Director, Public Transportation and Rail Division, provide an update regarding the future of Amtrak. President Bush's proposal would essentially eliminate Amtrak funding, and require the state to potentially seek an alternative operator for Amtrak Cascades. The Amtrak Board recognizes that the financial situation cannot continue at its current level, and acknowledges that Amtrak needs to change the way it does business. Amtrak requested that states provide their needs in writing to them. It now appears that the federal government recognizes that states need support in continuing to operate Amtrak. A capital program is under considered, but there are sponsors needed. Secretary Mineta agrees that federal funding is necessary and wants to work with the states on a funding methodology.

## **PUBLIC AND LEGISLATOR COMMENT PERIOD**

Lloyd Flem, Executive Director, Washington Rail Passenger Association, explained that the Rail Passenger Association is an independent transportation advocacy organization. He commented on Secretary Mineta's statement regarding funding cuts for commuter services and nationwide protests to those cuts. He noted that passenger rail commuter services should be considered a significant portion of our transportation infrastructure. He concurred that major changes need to occur at Amtrak, and cooperation from the private sector and federal and state government are absolutely necessary.

Paul Locke, citizen, commented briefly regarding Amtrak. He recalled that he had read that the President intended to eliminate Amtrak. He commented, that as indicated in the article, Amtrak personnel are operating the controls at train stations for the freight rail system, which creates a problem. Another significant issue is Amtrak is expensive to operate and has low ridership.

## **ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT**

Jennifer Ziegler, Administrator, provided an overview of ESSB 5513 and its impact on the Commission.

## **WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION**

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DAN O'NEAL, Chair

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RICHARD FORD, Vice-Chair

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EDWARD BARNES, Member

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VACANT

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ROBERT S. DISTLER, Member  
(Not a member at this meeting)

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ELMIRA FORNER, Member

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DALE STEDMAN, Member

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DOUGLAS MACDONALD, Ex-Officio Member  
Secretary of Transportation

ATTEST:

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REEMA GRIFFITH, Administrator

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DATE OF APPROVAL